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Maryland General Assembly
Sen. Judicial Proceedings Committee
Attn: Sen. William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: MD HB 1363 Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses

March 21, 2025

Dear Chair Smith,

On behalf of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), I am writing to express our strong support for Maryland House Bill 1363, Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses. This legislation represents a critical step forward in ensuring equal access to places of public accommodation for all Marylanders, particularly those who rely on accurate and reliable captioning to fully participate in cultural and entertainment experiences.

As the leading organization representing certified professional captioners, NCRA recognizes the indispensable role these skilled professionals play in delivering high-quality, precise captions that meet the diverse needs of the public. Certified captioners are trained to provide real-time and pre-recorded captioning with exceptional accuracy, ensuring that individuals—whether members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities or others who benefit from captions—can engage meaningfully with motion pictures and other public offerings. Their expertise guarantees that nuances in dialogue, sound effects, and context are faithfully conveyed, fostering an inclusive environment where all patrons can enjoy equal access.

In contrast, automatically generated captioning, while increasingly common, falls short of this standard. Such technology often produces errors in transcription, misinterprets context, and fails to account for accents, overlapping dialogue, or ambient sounds—all of which are essential for a complete and equitable experience. These shortcomings disproportionately affect individuals who depend on captions, undermining the intent of equal access in public accommodations. HB 1363's emphasis on effective captioning solutions aligns with the need for professional standards that automatic systems cannot reliably achieve.

We commend the Maryland General Assembly for addressing this important issue. To further explore the impact of this legislation and the vital contributions of certified captioners, I extend an invitation to engage with NCRA's Government Relations Department. Our team is eager to provide additional insights and data to inform your deliberations. Moreover, our captioner members stand ready to meet with you, offering firsthand perspectives on how their work ensures accessibility and upholds the principles of inclusion.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the well-being of all Maryland residents. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you on this meaningful initiative.

Sincerely,

Keith Lemons

Keith R. Lemons, FAPR, RPR, CRR (Ret.)
President, National Court Reporters Association